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ABSTRACT

A perception of "faculty power" frequently expressed during consultant/consultee interactions is analyzed, and approaches to dealing with the perception and also meeting the consultation objectives are suggested. This commonly expressed perception is that faculty hold untested strength that should not be bothered, challenged, or antagonized. In a discussion with a consultant concerning a program or workshop intervention that may be appropriate for use with a larger group of faculty, comments often are made suggesting that the faculty will not accept the intervention or will be formidable opponents. This response may be viewed as a form of protection against changing the structure or culture of an organization. The reaction also may be viewed in terms of introjection or projection. The individual's fear of resisting, doing poorly, or acting negatively toward the foci of consultation in conversations with the consultant may be projected onto the faculty. The message is a version of "I wouldn't mind engaging in the activity, but our faculty wouldn't like it." In addition, for the holder of the perception, the introjection of the concept of a powerful faculty can be ego-supporting and positive. It is suggested that the faculty's reaction to interventions may be viewed more appropriately as the responses of individuals and not of the entire class or group, or that the consultant accept responsibility for the consequences of the training intervention. (SW)

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Advising Consultations: Spectral Images of Faculty Power

Comparisons between institutions inevitably lead to delineation of their differences. In my consulting experience at a variety of different types of institutions however, there is one mannerism of faculty and staff that is remarkably similar across institutions.

This mannerism consists of a commonly held perception concerning the power of the faculty. This perception, found so frequently in most institutions, is not merely the realistic observation of the legitimate authority of the faculty. Rather it is a view of the faculty as not only powerful, but ominous in the force or energy that may be found within their ranks. It is a "sleeping giant" view of the faculty. A perception that "the faculty" hold untold or untested strength and, at best, should not be bothered, challenged, or antagonized.

This perception of the faculty appears frequently in the stereotypical scenario of interactions between consultant and consultees. Typically, in conversations with an individual or a small

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group the topic turns to the identification of program or workshop interventions that may be appropriate for use with a larger group of faculty. It is in this dialogue, about what faculty will expect, participate in or approve of, that one hears allegations of the immense power of the faculty.

This perception is found in the comments by the institution's representatives to the effect that "Oh, the faculty wouldn't stand for that," or "I don't think we could do that here," or "I think you'll be in for a rough time if you were to suggest that to our faculty." In each case, the comments contain a message, sometimes overt and very direct, that faculty at the institution in question are a group that should be approached cautiously. By inference, the comments suggest the faculty hold immeasurable and unforeseen strength, and because their anticipated negative reaction cannot be predicted accurately, it's best to be safe rather than sorry in one's dealings with them.

The tendency for individuals to admit privately that the faculty is a force to be reckoned with is not role or status limited. Senior executives, middle management, senior faculty, junior faculty, counselors, and other staff all appear to be willing to share this view with the consultant. In almost every case this revelation is associated with a change in the person's verbal or nonverbal behavior that typically coincides with the disclosing of "family secrets." The similarity between the attribution about the omnipotence of the faculty and a youngster's comment, "Say, have you heard about that big bully who lives down the street" is

conspicuously high.

Although it may be true that at some institutions the faculty have earned and justly deserve, their "sleeping giant" reputation, and thus are perceived correctly, there may be another explanation for the ubiquitousness of this perception. The perception may say more about the perceiver than the perceived.

Basis for the Perception

Klein[2] speaks of the remarkable facility we all have of viewing self and others as a composite of parts or objects, good and bad, and of shifting, separating, or splitting those internalized figures to magnify the positive and minimize the negative. In addition, Klein postulates that we engage in the stockpiling of the positive elements, our own as well as those borrowed from others, and the exporting of the negative impulses, feelings or thoughts. According to Klein we borrow through a process she calls introjection, the taking in of attributes of others. We export undesired parts of our self through projection, that is, the sub-conscious transportation of our negative attributes to others. In this manner we disown undesirable qualities for instance, selfishness, and in turn find that others around us seem to have an unusually "selfish" nature. This identification by projection and interjection implies a combination of splitting off parts of the self and projecting them onto (or rather into) another person and the identification of the ego with an object or characteristic external to the individual. How might this subconscious arranging of personal qualities explain the perception of faculty as dangerously powerful?

According to Jaques[2], identification with a group is one means of defending oneself against anxieties whose sources cannot be consciously controlled. Thus, for the holder of the perception, the introjection of the concept of a powerful faculty is positive and ego-supporting. After all, if the group is powerful, or competent, or successful, and I'm a member or associate of the group, then I must be powerful, or competent, or successful as well. If the introjection is that "ideal" faculty are concerned primarily about some things and not others, let's say research rather than advising, then activities that are research-associated are favored over those that are advising-related.

In part, this process may account for the professorial norm or model that emphasizes the importance of research. Ladd[3] reports whether or not they themselves do research or want to engage in original scholarship, most faculty seem to believe that the most meritorious behavior of an academic man or woman is the performance of significant research (p. 5).

At the same time, the individual's fear of resisting, saying no, doing poorly, or acting negatively towards the foci of consultation in conversations with the consultant may be projected into the faculty. Consequently, it is not the individual whom one is speaking to who is hesitant, resistant, or difficult to work with, it's those other members of the faculty! In our conversation, then, the individual is only giving the consultant fair warning about how "the faculty" will react. The message is a version of "Oh I wouldn't mind engaging in the activity, but our faculty sure wouldn't like it."

This response may also be viewed as a form of protection against change. Attempts to intervene or change the structure or the culture of an organ-

ization are resisted because of the threat to the status quo. Once change is undertaken, it is more than likely that individuals will have to adjust and change personally in order to catch up with the changes they have produced (Jaques, p. 496). One way of obtaining this protection is for the individual to collude with the social institutions of the organization to verbally support a change, but not so strongly that change is actually brought about.

Social institutions, as the term is used by Jaques, are social structures with the cultural mechanisms governing relationships within them. The social structures are the roles or positions held by persons and the cultural mechanisms are the conventions, customs, or rules used in regulating relations between members. At one level one finds the manifest and consciously agreed upon form and content of institutions, at another level the fantasy form and content.

The conscious form and content of institutions are those values, ideas, and programs with which few disagree. For instance, the notion that teaching or advising are important to the institution is one that is accepted generally. Correspondingly, the view that opportunities to develop advising skill and competence should be more readily available to the faculty advisor is also widely acknowledged. Supporters of this last idea would affirm that information, training, or other forms of assistance for advisors are desirable and appropriate steps should be taken to make them available to the advisor.

On the other hand, the fantasy social form and content of an institution refers to the form and content of social relationships at the level

of the common individual fantasies which the members of the institution share by projective and introjective identification (Jaques, p. 482). In the example given earlier, the individual identifies with the positive (ideal) aspects of the faculty and projects onto the faculty the individual's hostility, suspicion, or other forms of maladaptive behavior. From the perspective of our institutional representative the faculty take on the negative attributes that are unconsciously denied by the representative. The faculty became then, a group that is strong, independent, skilled, arrogant or powerful, one having the potential to be downright nasty if provoked.

This process permits the individual to express favor for particular action while warning of dire consequences from the faculty. The discussion of role-playing in training programs is a good example. Often when the consultant suggests role-playing as a training activity the representative will express interest in and support for participation in such activities. At the same time, however, the representative will often comment about how role-playing will be resisted or rejected by the advisors at this particular school.

It is unlikely that the consultant can suggest activities or imply certain social changes that will suit perfectly the needs of all individuals. What the consultant may do however is to proceed in a manner designed to assist individuals to adjust their internal defense systems in order to cope with the activities or actions suggested by the consultation.

Dealing with the Perception

One step in dealing with the perceptual phenomenon of faculty power is for the consultant to accept the observation at face value but to explore the perceiver's reasons for such a conclusion. That is, what evidence or rationale does the perceiver use to buttress this perception? A gentle but probing discussion may help clarify the picture where, in all likelihood, although some members of the faculty may respond negatively many will not. Reaction by faculty, then, may be viewed more appropriately as the responses of individuals and not of the entire class or group.

A second step that may prove helpful is for the consultant to accept responsibility for the consequences of the training intervention. Societies provide institutionalized roles whose occupants are sanctioned, or required, to take into themselves the projected objects or impulses of other members. In an advisor-training workshop the consultant assumes responsibility for the workshop activities, consequences and outcomes. By publicly assuming this responsibility the consultant provides a mechanism where participants may project the negative or undesirable elements of the workshop into the consultant while integrating the positive or desirable components. In Jaques' words, individuals may put their internal conflicts into persons in the external world, unconsciously follow the course of the conflict by means of projective identification, and re-internalize the course and outcome of the externally perceived conflict by means of introjective identification (p. 497). In other words, if the workshop generates negative consequences the consultant is at fault while positive

workshop outcomes are attributed to the competence, acumen or good sense of the participants.

A third step for the consultant is to use emergence of the perception as one indicator of the degree of unconscious cooperation at the fantasy level among members of the institution. Jaques suggests that change occurs when the fantasy social relations within an institution no longer serve to reinforce individual defenses against psychotic anxiety. According to him, imposed social change which does not take account of the use of institutions by individuals, to cope with unconscious psychotic anxieties, is likely to be resisted.

Consequently the consultant should be alert to impromptu and unsolicited comments from individuals about the larger group. These observations may provide the consultant with an early-warning-system regarding the common anxieties and unconscious collusions that exist among members of the institution. In Jaques' words, the reasons for the intractability to change of many social stresses and group tensions may be more clearly appreciated if seen as the "resistances" of groups of people unconsciously clinging to the institutions that they have, because changes in social relationships threaten to disturb existing social defenses against psychotic anxiety (p. 479). If the consultant can cultivate the same appreciation, then each consultation contains the foundation for a good beginning.

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